

LETTER

TO

AN ENGLISH FRIEND

ON THE

Rebellion in the United States,

AND ON

BRITISH POLICY.

BOSTON:
TICKNOR & FIELDS.
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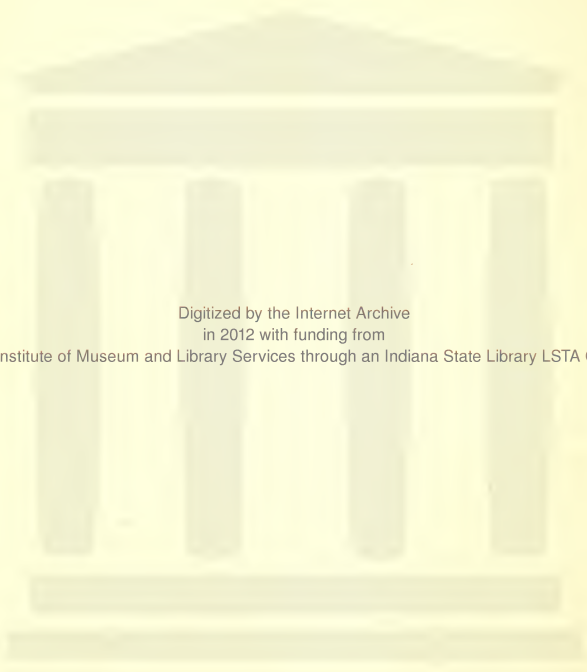
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THE following private letter was addressed to an English correspondent, with no view of publication; but he permitted it to appear in print, and forwarded a copy to this country. Many friends have urged a republication here in pamphlet form.

Important events are crowding upon us. The loyal States in service and sacrifice, in summoning a new army of six hundred thousand men to the field, — putting forth another fraction of their power, — prove their undying devotion to their country's cause, and their determination to crush forever this causeless and wicked rebellion.

The intense selfishness of British policy continues. Mainly through that policy and the undisguised sympathy and material aid afforded without stint by British subjects, — mingled with wordy threats of intervention, — the rebellion has been protracted to the present time.



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LETTER.

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, March 3, 1862.

MY DEAR SIR : —

I should have answered your kind letter at an earlier moment, but for the pressure of my official duties, and latterly from a temporary illness. I have not thought it necessary to struggle against these obstacles, lest, through the complication between England and America, an early war should ensue, and our intercourse be cut off. I have had but little fear of that kind. I knew that my country was just and well inclined to peace, and I trusted that yours, despite all appearances, would prove so.

I now write in good part, my dear sir, and feel assured that you will so receive it, in relation to the political part of your letter, — a subject that I should not touch upon but for your introduction.

On first reading this portion of your letter, I was inclined to smile at the strangeness of your views ;

but the second thought was that of mingled astonishment, mortification, and sorrow that our condition in the loyal States was so little understood, — nay, was so entirely misrepresented.

You fear that our respectable and worthy inhabitants are overawed by the rowdies of New York and the mischievous editors of newspapers ; and, at the same time, express the hope that the good sense of some of our leading men may overrule the insane impetuosity of the people, and keep them from making war upon you ! Can this be so ? Is it so in my own beloved Puritan New England, — the land of churches and schools, of all good institutions, wise laws, and healthful influences ? Is it so even in the city of New York ? Is it so in any portion of the Middle States, or any portion of the loyal States ?

My friend, let me assure you, in the most solemn and earnest manner, that never was there a greater hallucination. How is it that enlightened Englishmen have been so generally and grossly deceived ? Has the public morale become permeated by rebel poison ? So it is that, in some way not to be divined, a thick, very thick, film has come over the mind of England, and involved it in darkness.

I know the character of our people and the condition of my country. I trust that I have not been an

inattentive observer of public events, or have misunderstood the true temper of our loyal States, and I beg leave to repeat that I am utterly astonished at the gross delusion in which you are involved concerning us.

As for New England, — always sober, considerate and thoughtful, — she was never more so than now, — never more obedient to law, never more truly exercising her highest intelligence. Except for the marching of troops through our principal towns to the seat of war, and the marvellous activity and earnestness of our men, and our delicate, refined women, laboring month after month, summer and winter, in providing for the wants of our soldiers, many of whom are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, you would not imagine our condition other than one of profound peace. Trade goes on as usual, with only partial and temporary diminution, while the healthful workings of our civil, religious, literary, and eleemosynary institutions, and the dominant influence of our best citizens, are as large and free as in the palmiest period of our history. We are too much engaged — too entirely wrapt in the holy work of saving our dear, bleeding country, for it is our country — to allow the slightest footing to mob-law and rowdyism. The quietest hamlet

in England is but a type of the entire of New England.

What I say of the six New England States is true of the other loyal States of the Union, including the great State of New York, and the Middle States. Even the city of New York, containing about one quarter of the population of the whole State, and of late years representing the stormiest democratic liberty of the whole country, — except, perhaps, the city of Baltimore, which began to hatch treason, but has been beautifully restored by the strong, loyal arm, — I say, even the city of New York has not been so quiet and well ordered for years. It has overturned and wholly routed that city administration which seemed fastened upon it indefinitely, and had all along pandered to the “largest-liberty party,” — in other words, to corruption, — and selected a sound, upright mayor to rule its destinies.

I join with you in your desire of peace and good understanding. I like your spirit of patriotism, and smile approbation at your readiness to take up a rifle, even at the age of seventy, to defend the honor of your country, should it be endangered. But, my dear sir, you have no occasion to don your harness; your country is not, nor has it been likely to be, attacked from this side of the water by England's

“ungracious descendants.” At no time has a disposition existed on our part to inaugurate a quarrel. On the other hand, we have been grieved, deeply grieved, and public feeling sadly imbibited, by the course of England throughout the whole of our troubles, when she might have grappled us to her as by “hooks of steel.”

In the fall of 1860 the Prince of Wales came through the breadth of our land from the Canada border to the city of Washington. It was a triumphal tour, a royal march. He was received everywhere with the highest and warmest demonstrations of respectful regard. Never was there a more lavish testimony, a greater outpouring of the popular heart, except when Washington, in 1789, and Lafayette, in 1824-5, received the plaudits of a grateful people for services neither to be weighed nor measured. Public bodies, learned societies, civic corporations, and private individuals vied with one another in hearty demonstration. Balls, *fêtes*, military reviews, concerts, excursions by sea and land, were all tendered and accepted. Every effort was made to render his brief sojourn and that of his suite a pleasant episode in their European life. In but one place in his extended tour was he treated with any but the highest respect, and that was at Richmond,

the capital of the Slave State of Virginia, where he encountered marked rudeness, and whence he was glad to beat a hasty retreat, with no disposition to extend his tour within the dark territory of human bondage.

This all but royal progress was not only a personal demonstration in favor of one probably destined to fill a large space in English history; it was an unmistakable regard for the mother country,—a regard which had been growing and deepening for some years, and which seemed to be intertwining with our growth,—while, beyond all this, there was profound love and veneration for the Queen,—not merely as Queen, but as the model of wife, mother, woman. It appeared then as if we were united to England by strong and endearing ties, and that the two nations would illustrate and perpetuate the onward and upward march of Anglo-Saxon civilization and liberty.

We were strong then; we dreamed very pleasant dreams. Suddenly there broke out a rebellion such as the world, I think, has never seen, either for its cause, its baseness, or its vast proportions. High officers in the Federal government,—a class that had been honored, petted, and trusted for more than fifty years,—leading men in the Slave States, proved

traitors to their country, and cunningly made use of the opportunity which office gave them to pervert all their trusts, robbing the Union of thousands of cannon, tens of thousands of muskets and rifles, detaching large portions of our army, especially the artillery, from their positions on the coast, and sending them to the remote interior, dismantling most of the navy of the home squadron, and despatching the residue to distant seas; committing wholesale robberies of the national treasury, seizing upon all the fortresses on which they could lay their hands, works of vast strength, built by the government of our common country, for the common defence against foreign enemies, and left, in the security and trust of profound peace among our own people, with but slight garrisons; indeed, in every way disarming and demoralizing the country of their nativity and allegiance, determined in their fiendish purposes to ruin the Constitution of their country if they could not rule that country in the continued spread and perpetual domination and despotism of human slavery. Continuing in power, according to the forms of the Constitution, for four months after the election of President Lincoln, and until his inauguration, these traitors had it all their own way, under that imbecile coward, President Buchanan. Unchecked during

that long and gloomy period, they prostrated their country almost beyond the hope of recovery. There were traitors, not only in the national Cabinet, but in the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, — the city of Washington and the public offices were full of them. Nor were they confined to the South. Northern sympathizers, men of commercial alliance, demoralized by trade with the South, of strong pro-slavery tendencies, haters of Republicanism, were numerous, — we know not how numerous. (Now, thank God, those who remain speak with bated breath.) State after State became imbued with the deadly virus of treason and rebellion, and fell from their loyalty. Government was paralyzed. Had we a country? It trembled in the balance. It was as if Scotland had claimed a dissolution of the British union, — had asserted her independence, fired on the flag of your country, and trodden it under foot. Much more excusable would be Scotland, which, notwithstanding the “union,” had been brought in after ages of blood.

We were finally startled from our propriety, and feared utter destruction to our liberties and land, when our national flag went down dishonored. But that extremity was needed: then a most astonishing change was seen; nothing else had been able to

unite us, — that did. The uprising of the loyal heart as the flag went down, was glorious. The President's proclamation found a ready and hearty response in all the free States, and we begin to breathe more freely and take courage, and to find that we have a country, — not lost, and worthy of defence by fortune and life.

Though united for the holy purpose of a country's salvation, our people have been slow to come up to the understanding of the great cause of all our woes. The schools of struggle and adversity have educated us as nothing else could. The *causa causans* now stands revealed. Slavery, in all its hideous forms, worse even than Cuban, is the great foe of our peace and happiness.

The rebellion *is* gigantic, — covering an area equal to one fourth of Europe, and a sea-coast, on which a blockade is to be enforced, of more than 3,000 miles. The white population of the rebel States exceeds six millions of people. To meet and crush this high-handed crime we had but a few thousand soldiers, to resist their bands, which had been in careful training for months. Out of Massachusetts there was scarcely the form of military organization. Now, we have more than 600,000 men in the field, and a navy on the coast of towards

300 vessels, — many of the vessels, it is true, improvised for the occasion, but many thoroughly built by the government; while, before the year expires, we shall have a navy of which no country need be ashamed: and, what is more, we have learned lessons of preparation for national exigencies that will not die out in this generation.

In our ignorance and simplicity, we thought and expected — honestly thought — that we should have sympathy from abroad. We did not expect it from the old effete monarchies of Continental Europe, — from the despotisms, — except, perhaps, from France, our ancient ally. But we said, and that with undoubted confidence, we shall have the sympathy and moral support of England, — anti-slavery England. Her instinct, her whole leaning, must be for the North, for freedom and the right. The cause of this rebellion, we thought, can have no single attribute to recommend it to her sense of justice and to her rank in civilization. We remembered our pleasant relations, seeming all harmony; the close alliance of blood, — a common ancestry, and a growing literature; we have treaties of peace and commerce, and are bound together in a thousand ways. We shall have no trouble with England. True, nations are selfish, but England is not *so* selfish, and she

will prove herself just, and give a wide berth to the rebellion. Thus confidently we believed, until the amazing news reached our shores that these traitors were acknowledged a "belligerent power!" Very harmless words in themselves, but very destructive in their consequences. Then was first revealed the selfish policy of England. Did she see any weakness in the joints of our armor? Was she anxious to divide us beyond the power of reuniting, and to take the earliest opportunity, as soon as any slight pretence occurred, to acknowledge the independence of the traitors. It looked so. It is the first step that costs, and here was an immense stride taken; there remained but one short step. This long stride was taken in hot haste. It was a foregone conclusion. I say "hot haste," for then we were without representation at the British Court. Mr. Dallas had surrendered his functions, and was entirely out of sympathy with the Cabinet at Washington, while Mr. Adams, his successor, as the ministry well knew, was on his way to your shores, and ready to communicate to your government the true condition of things. Indeed, Mr. Adams reached London either on the very day the proclamation appeared, or the day following. This admitted but of one conclusion. We felt this deeply at the time, and we have ever

since felt it as most ungracious, ungenerous, and injurious treatment. It was easy to see that she was turning the cold shoulder to us, that she was glad of our troubles. Perhaps the greed of gain, the poor cry of cotton, made her deaf to justice, magnanimity, friendship, and blood, and willing to lend a helping hand in breaking up an empire which, in its consolidated strength, might not prove of good omen to the political institutions of the Old World. Whatever the motive, the fact has all along been patent; the bias has been but one way; we have experienced no good-will, as in days of sunshine. It has made the judicious grieve.

I am glad to know that yourself and some other gentlemen are friendly to our cause; for this I feel thankful, and hope it will spread till darkness is dispelled. We have felt, and still feel, the heavy weight of an adverse public sentiment. Our partial reverses on the land and the occasional escape of a vessel from our blockading squadron have been watched with insane satisfaction. Even our stone blockade would be made a pretext for interference, were not our right to deal with our own, *flagrante bello*, beyond legitimate discussion, though not beyond European casuistry. From the London "Times" up and down; from Russell, its correspondent, with

seeming fairness perverting the truth, and with false vaticinations ; from almost all the leading newspapers that come to our shores ; from the monthlies and quarterlies, University Magazines, New Monthlies, Blackwoods, Edinburghs, London Quarterlies, Westminster, and the whole race, whether Tory, Whig, or Radical, we have but one tone, that of supercilious exaltation and exultation, gloating over our misfortunes, rejoicing over our supposed disintegration, and looking forward to the time of our early and final paralysis and destruction. Among these, Blackwood holds easy and bad pre-eminence, in a series of articles which, if not written by rebels themselves, are so decidedly written in their interest as to be beyond the pale of criticism in their gross malignity. How do you account for this changed tone of the British press, from diurnal to grave quarterly, with but one refrain ? I will not stop to account for it or speculate about it ; it is enough that the ugly fact exists. Our travellers, men and women of education and position, who have visited England since the rebellion began to blaze, or were found there at the time, write and speak feelingly of the changed tone. The altered treatment, shown in the chilly civility, the averted look, the open sneer and taunt, have made their residence uncomfortable and

painful. I do not speak of those persons connected with politics or public functions, but gentlemen and ladies, cultivated and refined, who move in our best circles in private life ; they bear one uniform testimony. England is no longer a country they care to visit, much less to abide in.

New England has ever been considered more English than any part of the country ; and Boston, of all places in New England, the most intensely English, so much so as to be rather a matter of reproach to us. But now how changed ; not at once, and not willingly, but slowly, reluctantly, and by the stern enforced necessity of facts. Our purest and best people, men of high consideration among us, of the most liberal culture, authors of high mark, whom I value as choice friends, heretofore, like myself, friendly to England, and not only so, but who have never been slow to take up the cudgel in her behalf, even in very doubtful cases, and what many would consider her corruptions,—these persons have been brought to read in characters of light the selfish policy of England, the disposition to aid in our political dissolution, and directly or indirectly to cultivate the slave power, which is only another name for crushing high Christian principle. There is now among them, as well as among all others, men and

women of our educated classes, and our intelligent yeomanry, — the best educated yeomanry in the world, — I speak of the New England yeomanry advisedly, not boastingly, though in all the free States great attention is paid to their training, — one uniform sentiment, I will not say of intense hate, for I ought not to use that phrase, but of intense distrust and aversion. Years will not, perhaps this generation will not, restore the confidence which existed when the Prince of Wales was here ; and all which confidence England might so easily have retained. “ Confidence is a plant of slow growth.”

In the case of Mason and Slidell — late United States Senators, false to their God and their country, wretched men, dyed in the deepest guilt of treason and rebellion — we have another instance of the eager willingness of the Ministry to believe according to a foregone conclusion. That an explanation should be sought was clear enough as between two honorable, independent countries, and every charitable construction should be made as between nations supposed to be in profound peace. The demand was well enough as finally settled upon, so far as form was concerned ; but, either willingly, or pressed on, not by the “ mob,” but by the rabid force from without, it was made most offensive. It insulted by a

threat more galling than words, — by the ostentatious parade of a numerous fleet and army, at once to be precipitated upon these shores in case of an unfavorable answer, — or a proposition to discuss the matter as a question of public law, or reference to some friendly arbitrament. The fiery tone of the British press had become inflamed to fervent heat, what is called at the South the language of “fire-eaters.” It seemed determined that the question should not be peaceably settled. England was fatally insulted, — the time to acknowledge the independence of the rebels was coming on apace. Under other circumstances, had we not been supposed to be severely crippled, but to possess the union and power of former years, such a minatory course, do you suppose, would have ever been adopted? I answer, without fear of contradiction, “Never, never, never.”

Amid all this my country was calm. We had refrained from all violence, all recrimination, as a people. We desired to discuss the question calmly. Publicists among us, grave, well-instructed men, would consider the question of international law, whether under it the traitors should be given up, and there was a division of opinion. In the popular, unprofessional mind the sentiment was against

surrender, the wish being father to the thought, perhaps. But then, they said, this question is in the hands of the administration of our choice,—able men, who are competent to discuss it without heat, and in all its relations. To them we are willing to leave it, and will bow to their decision. And so it was left without demur or hesitation. We set aside all the British precedents and practice which bristled in our favor all along our neutral history, from the latter part of the last century, when we became a power, down to our war with England in 1812, and true to our word, yielded all individual opinion to the well-reasoned, statesmanlike doctrines of Mr. Seward, rising above all passion and circumstances of aggravation into the calm region of clear truth. It was the doctrine we had always contended for, and we obeyed, without a murmur, the authoritative expression of national opinion. There was no “mob” there, no “rowdies,” but the well-considered acquiescence of loyal citizens. Never was there a more striking exhibition of obedience to law,—ascending to the dignity of Bishop Hooper’s exaltation.

I hope that England will bear her part in reviewing her old belligerent doctrines, to which she is now invited in her new and unaccustomed position as a neutral power, and will join the United States

in our long and persistent efforts to make modern international law the equivalent of modern civilization. In this way the affair of the Trent, which Lord John was rendering big with portent, may become a blessing, and all will then rejoice in it. It was confidently said that our government would not dare to surrender the traitors, however just they might think it; that this, in fact, was a "mob government," and to disobey the behests of the mob would be the destruction of that government. It was placed in a position of great danger; not, however, from the fear of a mob,—that was the last of its concern; it was equal to that occasion. Called upon to yield up these persons on pain of immediate war, and sneered at as cowards and paltrons should they comply; every succeeding day, as news arrived from abroad, bringing fresh insults,—and we are not the least sensitive people on earth,—the Times, the Morning Post, &c., pouring forth their daily ribaldry and slander of President Lincoln's administration; and our people, in all this, to have exhibited a passionless calm, to have weighed deliberately, and to have decided according to our views of right, reflects the highest credit on the dignity and sense of justice that pervade our national administration.

Had the fury of the English mind found a like response in America, we should have been incontinently plunged into a war. It is one of the worst features of the Trent affair, that, if the Ministry did not lead in raising the excitement, it allowed itself to be hounded on, and the public still further to be inflamed, week after week, when it had in its own hands the means of allaying it, and bringing on an early, peaceable solution. I refer, as you may well know, to the despatch from Mr. Seward to Mr. Adams, declaring that Wilkes had acted without the instructions or knowledge of the Federal government, and assuring England of the best disposition on our part in the matter. This, we know, was read by Mr. Adams to the British Cabinet, and yet, to their disgrace be it spoken, they kept this document carefully concealed for weeks, suffering all England to be borne away by maddening rage, with the accumulation of taunt, threat, abuse, and insult, when one little word would have been like oil upon the troubled waters.

I have met with no explanation of this conduct, nor do I know that any has been offered. If I see two individuals engaging in a deadly quarrel, and know that it arises from a mutual misunderstanding, which I have the means of honorably clearing up,

but fail to do it, and one or the other falls, am I not guilty of his blood? Will it not be required at my hands? And what is this compared with the guilt of plunging two nations into bloody strife? I hope, for the honor of your country, that there may be some satisfactory explanation of this persistent silence.

As the clouds which have overshadowed our country shall be dispelled, and the clear sunshine break forth, our old assured strength will again become manifest, and we shall become stronger than in the past. The Gorgon heads of slavery will never again be allowed to project their hideous features as in times past. I trust in God that in the not far distant future every vestige of human bondage will be swept away, and that we shall have a true America, which shall be a light among the nations.

We of the North have had guilt, great guilt, in the past, in connection with slavery. I will not disguise it. But let me, I pray you, suggest that England is largely the cause of our unhealthy state. More than one hundred and fifty years ago, I think a few years later than Plymouth Colony, England began its system of granting charters,—exclusive charters,—to companies to carry on the slave-trade

on the coast of Africa. This was followed by other charters, in which the king and nobles were interested, and the exclusive trade was enjoyed (!) by England until the revolution in 1775. Indeed, still further, not satisfied with filling her own colonies with slaves, England bargained with Spain for the exclusive supply of the Spanish colonies for thirty years, and had by the bargain a gainful trade, and poured money into the national treasury as its share of the profits, and the Queen boasted of it!

Over and over again, before the Revolution, petitions went up to the throne for the suppression of the slave-trade, and were uniformly rejected. I do not mean that the South was then ready to abolish slavery, far from it; but putting an end to the trade, under the circumstances of the times when our national Constitution was adopted, bid fair to put an end to slavery itself; and this was then the opinion of our wisest men. Then the tone was healthful; all considered slavery a curse, and no slave could be imported after twenty years. There were but 600,000 slaves in the United States in 1789, and no large encouragement for their increase.

Then came the cotton-gin, the invention of a Massachusetts man, and suddenly came the growth of cotton, enriching the South, and bringing her up

out of deep poverty; and then came slave-breeding for the market, in which millions per annum are made by begetting human cattle for the Southern shambles.

So that, from slavery being a curse, as in the days of our fathers, the doctrine of the modern heresiarchs, boldly pronounced, is, that slavery is a blessing, the corner-stone of a free government, and a divine institution. To the slave power the whole country had been subservient. It has ruled trade, enacting and repealing tariffs, setting up and putting down administrations, controlling legislation, binding the Democratic party of the North to its car, dragging along in its train much of the free spirit of the North, and binding in its fold at last even England herself, to the injury of her manhood and sense of right.

England, I trust, is soon to be emancipated; and when the time comes, as come it will, she will look back upon her course with us since the rebellion broke out with no very complacent feelings, and no longer show her leanings in favor of the cause of human slavery. The day of Sharp, Clarkson, Wilberforce, and others, that glorious band, will return to illuminate the nation. Already it is a pleasure

to see that the Bishop has not forgotten his father's teaching.

I have written to you, my dear sir, at great length, much greater than I first intended, though the difficulty is to know when or where to stop. Indeed, I should not have said anything more than to thank you for your kindness in antiquarian matters, had you not touched upon the subject of my country, in which I was persuaded your fair mind labored under great misconceptions grievously to our injury, and had I not believed that you would be glad to be correctly informed, and, like every other right-minded man, would be thankful for it. In thus doing I naturally took a view of the course of England while we have been under partial eclipse. You, perhaps, will not think my view correct, but I wish you to give me credit for sincerity, and I know you will. I assure you that I represent the general sentiment of all classes.

I remain, my dear sir, faithfully yours,

JOSEPH WILLARD.

P. S. — I have just met with Mr. Mill's elaborate piece in *Fraser* for February. I have read it with exceeding gratification. In almost every particular it is precisely what it should be, and is eminently

just. Mr. Mill rises to the full comprehension of the question between the North and South. Evidently he has paid much attention to the subject, and has the mastery of it. He sets forth clearly the great danger from which England has barely escaped of placing herself in a false position, perhaps, for all time, an occasion of future, unavailing regret.

E. P., Esq.

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